

Creating a consistent web presence:
The dilemma of the College of Liberal Arts' departmental websites

Sarah B. Howard
Strategic Communication M.A. Capstone Paper
2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Author	1
Introduction.....	3
Literature Review.....	6
Research Questions	13
Method	14
Results.....	17
Support for Research Questions	31
Discussion.....	35
Future Research and Limitations	39
Conclusion	40
References	42
Appendices	44

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Howard is the communications manager for the University of Minnesota School of Journalism & Mass Communication (SJMC), a department within the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). I received my B.A. in journalism in 2006 from the University of Minnesota and after nearly seven years in magazines I began my position at SJMC in June 2011. I was quickly encouraged to apply for the Professional M.A. in Strategic Communication and was enrolled in fall 2011.

In my role at SJMC, updating, maintaining and creating content for the School's website (<http://sjmc.umn.edu>) is one of my main responsibilities. When I began my position, the website was in need of a lot of work as my position had been vacant for four months. During this time, there was little management and oversight regarding the health of the site. The system for updating the site was erroneous and I worked to streamline the process. I have been able to improve many elements and systems in SJMC's site, but due to limitations in a bureaucratic University system, (i.e. standards, templates and limits in design capabilities), the issue of web communications has continued to be a struggle.

While in my position, I have participated in many conversations and workshops regarding websites across CLA. In January 2013, in an effort to gauge the state of websites across CLA, the College hosted a daylong workshop attended by nearly 75 personnel across the College to discuss the numerous problems with websites and web communication. The workshop quickly pointed out the problems with websites across the college. Riddled with litter, inconsistencies and a lack of infrastructure, the CLA web presence is erratic with no real ownership.

This meeting sparked the idea for my capstone paper. I found that I wanted to further explore the impact of CLA's inconsistent websites and to help solve the problem for CLA. I intend to share this paper's insights and suggestions with the CLA communications team.

INTRODUCTION

Websites are a standard communication tool in today's world. A company or an organization without a website is lacking a strong marketing and communications outlet. For institutions of higher education, websites are vital and are used for recruitment and attracting interest. Websites are critical for colleges and universities for three distinct reasons: (1) communication, (2) access to tools such as directories and databases and (3) for marketing and promotion (Poock and Lefond, 2001).

The entire college search process has been changed by the Internet (Bitler, et al., 2000). It was reported in 1998 that 82.9 percent of students used the Internet to research universities (Brunner and Brown, 2007). It could be argued that number is now near 100 percent with mobile becoming an increasingly important tool.

Research suggests that websites rank second only to campus visits as the most important tool for researching colleges (Will and Callison, 2006) and university websites attract a variety of internal and external audiences (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010).

But, simply having a web presence does not guarantee that your site will attract visitors (Van Der Geest and Spyridakis, 2000). Websites need to be accurate, interesting and full of rich content to not only keep visitors coming back for more but to also associate a positive reputation with an organization's brand. Websites build a relationship with prospective customers (Chang, 2012), and, in a University setting, prospective students should be treated as potential customers and consumers.

The University of Minnesota is a Research 1 institution made up of 18 colleges, one of which is the College of Liberal Arts (CLA). While the University of Minnesota strives to have a consistent brand across its web platforms, the 34 departments within CLA have an inconsistent web presence, a lack of central messaging and a weak infrastructure. No one departmental website looks like another, from different templates and colors to different writing styles and tone.

Inadequate websites are rampant across all educational platforms. Research has shown that college and university websites are poorly designed and reflect poorly on that educational institution (Will and Callison, 2006). “Universities are falling to the bottom of the online class,” Simon Norris, CEO of digital design agency, wrote in a 2012 article that appeared in *Education Journal* (6). “Universities should treat prospective students online like consumers,” he continued. Norris introduces the idea of “ROBOshopping,” which says that consumers are researching online and buying offline. This translates to the college experience. Norris argues that information must be readily available online so that students can make informed decisions.

CLA is aware of this problem, but due to limited funding, lack of infrastructure and decentralized communication in a bureaucratic environment, the online presence of CLA is scattered and lacking a clear, directed message. To help start to solve the problem, a January 2013 meeting of all CLA web communicators was held. This meeting began with an audit of CLA websites by online marketing and content strategist Kristeen Bullwinkle. She looked at all websites across the College and asked some hard questions of communicators. She found a variety of

inconsistencies across websites, as well as problems in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and search capabilities.

Strong web presence and searching capabilities are important for making sure a webpage and message comes across the right people. According to Bullwinkle's research, 67 percent of prospective undergraduates use search engines during their research and search for a college. In her report, Bullwinkle stated the following observations about the departmental websites in CLA:

1. No central message; no real messaging except on a very few pages
 2. Lack of understanding of target audiences; no "conversion funnel."
 3. Lack of ownership
 4. Lack of prioritization
 5. Suspected lack of resources and funding
- (Appendix A)

Bullwinkle's audit suggests that the College has a serious problem with its web presence. The inconsistent messaging, lack of target audience and overall lack of ownership on the websites is causing both internal and external problems.

This paper aims to examine the current state of CLA websites, the effects of an inconsistent web presence on the College's brand and user experience and to suggest strategy steps moving forward.

To understand the implications of this dilemma and the effects it may have on the College, important research was conducted:

- Academic articles on successful web communications, how prospective students use websites, and the connection between websites and brand were analyzed
- A content analysis of CLA departmental websites was conducted to gather a current state-of-affairs

- Interviews were conducted with personnel who work directly with College of Liberal Arts websites
- A survey was given to a convenience sample of 80 people to analyze the effect of inconsistent web communications on overall opinion of the CLA brand and to further explore what web users want from educational websites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To help investigate useful web strategies, literature regarding studies on web communication, web branding, web use in higher education, the effect of websites on brand and user experience was examined. Out of these articles, a number of themes emerged, including (1) the connection between website and brand, (2) importance of usability and organization of a site, (3) the importance of content, (4) the need for two-way communication and (5) attempting to answer the question of, “Who’s in charge?” Here, the themes are discussed in greater detail.

Connection Between Website and Brand

The Internet is a strong tool for building and supporting a brand’s image (Morris, 2003). A useable and aesthetically-pleasing website has become an important aspect in the overall branding and marketing program in most corporations and universities (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010).

Studies show that there is a strong positive relationship between the attitude toward the advertisement or website and the attitude toward the brand (Sicilia, et al., 2006). Therefore, a website that is well-received will have a positive effect on that organization’s brand.

Research suggests that if a prospective student finds a college or university website to be disappointing or frustrating, he or she then associates this digital experience with the quality and functionality of the institution itself (Will and Callison, 2006).

The homepage is a consumer's first interaction with an organization's website, and therefore, it provides the first impression of that institution. Its layout and accessibility can encourage, or discourage, further use and consideration of the site and organization (Bitler, et al, 2000).

Websites allow institutions to showcase their differential aspects. To do this, universities must communicate the values and benefits of attending a particular institution, with a particular emphasis on how they differ from others. To actively and successfully portray a brand, sites must show their competitive strengths while paying attention to the needs and wants of prospective students (Brunner and Brown, 2007).

Usability and Organization of a Website

The degree of difficulty a user has in acquiring information greatly affects the odds of them returning to the site or seeing the information as reliable. The look and design of a site should remain secondary to its usefulness (Bitler, et al., 2000). While many believe that "content is king," content becomes unimportant if a user cannot retrieve the information (Poock and Lefond, 2001).

Organizations need to create websites that are easy to navigate and understand (Gordon and Berhow, 2009). Ease of navigation is an important factor in determining whether a user is likely to visit the website again (Kang and Norton,

2004). The degree of enjoyment that a user has in browsing a website is the most important predictor of the user's overall rating of the website (Chang, 2012).

The convenience and usability of a site can determine the user's impression of the organization as a whole and the odds of that user returning to the site in the future (Kang and Norton, 2004).

Having too many levels of a page, called a "vertical website," allows a user to get lost easily and can be problematic as the user may abandon the site. Especially when researching educational institutions, prospective parents or students may leave a university website if it takes too many clicks to get to the information they are seeking (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010). Research suggests that users become frustrated if they need to explore more than three levels to obtain information (Poock and Lefond, 2001). Therefore, fewer levels with more information per level appears to be most effective.

Research suggests that when websites prove difficult for a user (either due to slow download, intricacy of site navigation or response time delays), the user has a negative evaluation of the site, which renders the website virtually useless for communication functions (Kang and Norton, 2006).

College and university websites should have an effective site architecture that is logical, easy to follow and has the prospective student in mind (Poock and Lefond, 2001). Organizing pages with groups or roles (prospective students, alumni and so on) in mind tends to greatly enhance the organization of the site as compared to groupings by "function," such as admissions or administration (Poock and Lefond, 2001).

The Importance of Content

Users form an impression of a brand's image based on the content and design of its website. The text and graphics on a webpage give the page a personality and allow the user to quickly decide whether or not the page is right for them (Chang, 2012).

The value of the content will make a difference in a website's ability to endure (Bitler, et al., 2000). But content cannot just mean "filler." Content needs to be valuable for the user, not just to fulfill an organization's internal motives (Gordon and Berhow, 2009).

On a website, information can easily become outdated. A website should be the platform to provide visitors with timely and accurate information (Kang and Norton, 2004). The appearance of outdated information is very troublesome for a website and is unacceptable in a medium that should be consistently updated. This is especially true with information regarding deadlines or policies. On these pages, a "last update" timestamp is recommended because it allows the user to know that the information is current (Bitler, et al., 2000). But, this timestamp makes it imperative that information be updated as needed. In today's age of constant communication, a timestamp from even the previous month may appear to be outdated.

Poock and Lefond's (2001) studies have shown that a mix of 70 percent text and 30 percent graphics is an ideal mix for websites, especially in the educational realm. According to these studies, graphics are apparently not very important when compared to other features of an educational institution's website. And while

graphics do help a student know if they'll "fit in," graphics should be used strategically, not casually (Pooock and Lefond, 2001).

While not as important as text, the impact of visual elements cannot be forgotten. Design plays a crucial role in shaping website personality and the interaction between consumers and brands. Research suggests that visual design elements, such as colors and graphics, appear most significant for communicating personality on a website, and therefore personality of a brand or organization. Dynamic visual information is expected from websites and may evoke more enjoyment than traditional media for users (Chang, 2012).

Four design principles are recommended to create an aesthetically-pleasing and comfortable website design: (1) consistent use of background colors and text on both home and linked pages, (2) consistent use of font styles, (3) a website loading time of less than 10 seconds and (4) placement of menus and hyperlinks across the top and/or down the lefthand side of the webpage (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010).

Content and design beg the question of audience. Chang (2012) suggests that tailoring websites to speak to a particular audience may be more effective than television or print advertising (835). And while university websites have a multitude of audiences, the web offers an opportunity to combine multiple message types targeted to numerous stakeholders and audiences (Sicilia, et al., 2006).

Kang and Norton (2006) suggest that college and university websites should speak to young adults (prospective students), as this is the largest potential public that will interact with an educational institution's website. This audience most

positively receives concise language and active voice. Kang and Norton's studies suggest that speaking directly to the audience in second-person language is effective (for example, "you will learn..." vs. "our students learn").

Consistent language throughout a website builds a positive impression about the school and accurate and objective information builds trust (Kang and Norton, 2006). Therefore, having a consistent tone on websites college-wide is an important step in building a brand and positive user experience.

The Need for Two-Way Communication

In a virtual world, relationships are built through two-way communication. The potential for interaction on university websites provides new and exciting opportunities to build relationships. Studies indicate that users want to interact with an organization, not just read content (Gordon and Berhow, 2009), especially when committing to such a large decision as an educational institution.

It has already been mentioned that university websites should be speaking to prospective students, who are most generally members of the millennial generation. This age group relies on technology for communication, not face-to-face interactions (Brunner and Brown, 2007), necessitating a need for two-way communication.

Currently, most websites use one-way communication (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010) and therefore miss an opportunity to build a relationship with the user. In today's digital age, "interaction" means more than a phone number or email address. Collaborative discussion forums, chat functions and feedback forms are

often used to enhance two-way communication for the user (Kang and Norton, 2004).

Kang and Norton argue that two-way communication with multiple stakeholders is central to a college or university's goal fulfillment because it creates an institution-public relationship and an increase in trust (2006).

Who's In Charge?

Many people running educational websites lack formal training in website design or writing (Van Der Geest and Spyridakis, 2000). Often, those who develop webpages tend to be self-taught employees who lack formal training or are students with little supervision (Poock and Lefond, 2001).

In early years of website development, a single individual, most often called a "webmaster," was in-charge of the look and feel of a site. Today, websites should be managed by a team, including a webmaster, designer and communications and marketing specialists (Groneman Hite and Railsback, 2010).

Websites should no longer be the responsibility of computer- and technology-oriented people, but instead should be treated as an integrated part of internal and external communication plans (Van Der Geest and Spyridakis, 2000).

Literature Review Discussion

The research and literature describes a clear picture of the importance of web communications on brand and suggestions for effective websites. Research strongly suggests that the connection between a website and brand is strong and

the positive reception of a website will be equated with a positive view of the brand. Usability is key to a website's success and difficulty will cause a user to abandon the site. Research suggests that educational websites should use two-way communication as a communication and relationship-building tool with their audience. And, finally, it is suggested that websites be team-managed with a mix of marketing, communication and information technology professionals.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In examining the themes seen throughout the literature review, it is clear that websites are a key communications tool that should be effectively used, especially by educational institutions, as many can no longer rely solely on reputation to attract students. But, what needs to be answered for the University of Minnesota College of Liberal Arts is how the inconsistent web presence across its 34 departments is affecting CLA's brand and what needs to be done to start creating a strategy for the College.

Several research questions emerge from this query:

RQ1: How does an inconsistent web presence across CLA affect the College's brand?

RQ2: What do users want from websites of educational institutions?

RQ3: What changes need to be made to start the process of creating a website strategy for CLA?

METHOD

Content Analysis

The first step in understanding the state of CLA websites is to conduct a content analysis of the websites of all majors across CLA. The goal of the content analysis was to gain a better understanding of the current state of affairs for CLA websites and to help make inconsistencies and needed next steps clear.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Kristeen Bullwinkle examined the content of CLA's websites in January 2013, but a deeper analysis of CLA's web content needed to be conducted to look at specific elements across all departmental websites, not just sporadic pages among these departmental sites.

According to the College's website (<http://cla.umn.edu/departments/majors.php>), there are 34 departments within CLA that offer 62 majors. The content analysis focused solely on these department's websites within CLA and does not examine the website of the College itself as well as the websites of research centers, individualized degree programs and CLA academic advising centers. In the content analysis, the coder examined eight aspects of each website based on the recommendations gathered in the literature review. Below are the aspects examined and the rationale for their being coded (See Codebook, Appendix B):

1. U of MN and CLA branding on homepage
2. Contact information found within three clicks
 - a. Recommended in literature review that contact information be easy to find and literature suggests that users will go through three clicks before becoming frustrated.
3. Pages that speak to "role" of the user
 - a. Literature suggests that "role"-style pages help a user navigate content. For example, "alumni" or "prospective students"
4. Outdated information found

- a. Coder looked for any information that is outdated and marked if such information was found. Does not include information with a heading such as “Past Events.”
 - b. Research suggests that outdated information leads a user to believe that site information is inaccurate.
5. Last modified time stamp on homepage
 - a. On each webpage, there is a last modified time stamp. Coder identified the last time that the homepage had been updated using this information.
6. Language found that speaks to students
 - a. Literature suggests using an active, second-person voice when speaking with prospective students.
 - b. Coder looked for the use of “you” on pages.
7. Method for two-way communication
 - a. This includes chat functions, submission forms and the like. Does not include email, as that would be included in the above “Contact Us” section.
8. Communications manager on-staff
 - a. Much of the welfare of these sites depends on a dedicated communications manager being on staff.

The Content Analysis was completed in early May 2013. The coding was done by the author and a second or third coder was not needed as the coding is straightforward (“yes” or “no”) instead of subjective (for example, feelings or impressions).

Personal Interviews

To help understand the current state of web communications across CLA, three subjects who work closely with CLA websites were interviewed:

- Source 1 provides support for service management efforts within the College of Liberal Arts Office of Information Technology (CLA-OIT).
- Source 2 is a member of the CLA Media & PR team.
- Source 3 has a leadership role within the College’s communications team.

The identities of the three subjects are kept hidden to keep the anonymity of the subjects. One-on-one interviews set in the individual's office were conducted in mid-March 2013 to early April 2013. Questions (Appendix D) centered on both current conditions around CLA web communications and on the individuals' attitudes toward websites, branding and web communications.

Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were recorded and transcribed (Appendix D). Several themes emerged across interviews. See Results section for further analysis.

Survey

To help understand what external audiences want in educational websites, a survey was sent to a convenience sample in May 2013. The survey was created with Survey Monkey and was distributed via social networks and email contacts.

Survey questions were created to better understand what users want in educational websites and to further support themes seen throughout the personal interviews and literature review.

For a complete list of survey questions, see Appendix E. Question 1 regarded whether or not people truly do use websites to find out information about post-secondary institutions. Question 2 sought to understand how people find departmental websites. Questions 3 and 4 aimed to understand what people want on University websites versus departmental/major websites. Questions 5 and 6 showed participants pictures of webpages from two departments within the University of Minnesota, one in CLA and another from a different college to

understand what brand users associated with these pages and to see if a stronger college brand really does impact the brand people associate with that webpage. Questions 7 and 8 aimed to find out if users really do care if a departmental website is associated with the university or college in which it's located. Question 9 sought to further evaluate the importance of website elements explored in the content analysis. Finally, Question 10 stemmed from the literature review and outright asked participants if outdated content on a website would affect their opinion of the organization.

Eighty participants began the survey with 76 completing the survey (four abandoned the survey, three at question 3, one at question 5). Demographic information was also asked to understand the age range and sex. Participants were also asked about their highest level of education because the survey explicitly asks about user experience with educational websites.

RESULTS

Content Analysis

The content analysis examined a number of elements across CLA websites and found a number of insights (For full results, see Appendix C).

When it comes to consistent design elements, there are a number of standardizations across CLA websites, including the University of Minnesota's "Driven to Discover" branding across the top and "College of Liberal Arts" branding at the bottom of each page. As part of this consistent footer, contact information for each department was listed, so 100 percent of CLA departments offer contact

information found within three clicks. But, the content analysis found that across CLA websites there is no method for two-way communication, for example, chat forums or feedback forms. The email contacts for all but one department were for departmental accounts, not personal accounts, which may lead a user to believe that their email will be easily lost and not answered.

The majority of websites (76 percent) had outdated information easily found on the website. Outdated events and news remains on the website when instead this information should be archived in a way that makes it clear to the user that this information is no longer current. There were instances in which the outdated information found on the website is right on the homepage.

The content analysis suggests that many CLA websites are not updated on a consistent basis. More than half (55 percent) of the homepages examined had not been updated in the past month. Some homepages had not even been updated in 2013. This may be because many homepages featured static “welcome” language about the department, but the homepage should be a dynamic place for updates and news.

The content analysis found that about one-third of CLA websites had language written in second-person that speaks directly to the audience (prospective students). Much of this content is found on homepages when describing the department or within the undergraduate or graduate content describing the program.

Confirming Bullwinkle’s earlier suspicions, there is a great absence of communications staff among CLA departments. The content analysis found that only

two (journalism and music) of the 34 departments had a communications manager on staff to oversee the website. These departments have private funds and therefore can afford a larger staff. Without a communications manager, the maintenance is left to administrative staff, who lack time and formal communications training.

Personal interviews

At the time of the interviews (March-April 2013), the CLA web department was very much in a state of transition. The College of Liberal Arts Office of Information Technology (CLA-OIT) was being dismantled into two parts. First, the CLA web team, which handles the web communication aspects of all CLA websites (such as updating content or uploading a photo), had just finished moving to the CLA Media & PR team. Second, the technical side of CLA-OIT (troubleshooting, log-in issues, etc.) was being folded into the University's larger OIT department.

Out of the interviews, several themes emerged, including (1) the change in thought of websites as communication tools, not just technology; (2) the need for strategy and brand moving forward; (3) the effect of University of Minnesota culture on the ability to create change; (4) inequalities in staffing amongst CLA departments (5) the lack of understanding about CLA's target audience and what this audience needs from CLA websites.

Web as a Communications Tool

All three subjects spoke about the importance of CLA's websites as a communications tool, not just a technical aspect, hence the web team's move to CLA

Media & PR. Often, websites are associated with technology and technology-related issues, but the move to Media & PR is a repackaging of web as a critical part of communications and places web more squarely into the communications function of the College (Source 3).

“[There has always been this question,] is it website technology first and words second, or the other way around? There has always been a close relationship, but now [with the move to Media & PR] it’s thought of solely as a communications function” (Source 2).

“The move to Media & PR gives the web team credibility. Clearly showing that the web is a communications function allows it to be strategic and not just everything to everyone” (Source 1).

With the move to Media & PR, it’s a clear message to leadership throughout the College that websites must exist as a communications function. This is new way of thinking that has facilitated a lot of the changes happening within CLA communications.

The Need for Strategy and a Brand

One of the biggest obstacles facing CLA communications is that the College is lacking a brand and a communications strategy to use moving forward. All three subjects talked about the need for strategy and that without an overall strategy, many website administrators are left with no clear direction or goals.

Throughout the interviews it became clear that the College is lacking a clear brand and is therefore lacking a clear direction in regards to communication and

strategy. “I think the college’s brand is not at full maturation” (Source 3). “We need a brand. We need to figure out where we are going. We need to figure out what those most important messages are that we want out there. And we need to figure out what the websites need to say to support those things. It needs to be part of an overall strategy” (Source 2).

The subjects agreed that the branding conversation needs to focus on “selling” the liberal arts and showing the audience why a liberal arts education is important. “The environment has really changed for both the University and CLA. Liberal Arts face more critical assessment and the level of state public support for higher education has changed” (Source 3). CLA’s brand needs to accommodate the recent economic recession, but it could be argued that the story still being told within CLA communications is of a pre-2008 mindset. “Since 2008, we need to be telling the story about our students getting jobs and acknowledging that school is expensive” (Source 2).

An important aspect of strategy moving forward is to think in a proactive, not reactive mindset (Source 1). Being able to predict issues, complications and problems will allow the College to handle these situations accordingly, instead of just reacting to every departmental request.

Strategy would go a long way to help website administrators be efficient. Without a strategy, it’s easy to say “yes” to everything and can cause confusion and difficulty when making decisions.

Effect of Culture on Communications Change

Culture refers to a company's values, operating style and traditions. It describes how people view their workplace and how things are done (Harvard Business Essentials, 2005, 72).

A lot of limitations regarding change within communication comes from the bureaucratic structure of a University and the limitations that longstanding culture can place on organizational change. This has affected how University websites were originally designed and how they are maintained to this day. "When the University was just building its first sites, every department and college went and got their own designer and there was no idea that we should centralize all of this" (Source 2). This culture of departmental autonomy holds to this day.

There are cases in which departmental autonomy makes sense. "Departments are closer to their students and audiences and know what they need to do to run. If a website is a repository of information, then the departments know what is needed as far as forms and hours and contact information" (Source 2).

However, this autonomy leads to disconnects in both external and internal communication. "There isn't any coordination across departments. It isn't in people's minds to have conversations with other departments and to think about what the other departments are doing. Everyone is doing everything 50 different ways" (Source 1). But this must change. "We are all linked together and we're all mutually dependent. We need to have strategies that advance mutual interest" (Source 3).

The University's culture also affects the level of comfort that people have around ideas such as "branding" and "strategy," especially when it comes to conversations about a collegiate strategy, not just at the department level (Source 1). Departments need to learn that branding is a good thing and can help with their overall goals, but some feel that branding can compromise artistic abilities and identities of the departments. Plus, to many in the academic community, the use of the word 'brand' can be "volatile" (Source 3).

Adding to complications, University culture leads to communications decisions being made by a chair or faculty member, instead of a trained communications professional. "Why are chairs or faculty the decision makers when it comes to websites? Is it just culture?" (Source 1).

The interviews suggest that culture within the University and College could prove to be a large barrier for communication and process changes moving forward.

Staffing Inequalities

Throughout departments in CLA, there is much inconsistency regarding staffing resources and skills when it comes to web communications. Within the College, websites are handled by a number of people, from communication experts to front-desk administrators to department chairs (Source 1).

There is a great inequality amongst departments in regards to staffing and funding allowances (Source 1). Since 2008, there have been significant reductions in communications functions within the College that has caused much content creation

to be lost (Source 2). But it's not just about content creation, issues such as content management and maintenance will take dedicated staff (Source 3).

This staff shortage leads to a lack of ownership regarding website content, which is a large cause of why so much content on CLA websites is not up-to-date or relevant. Many times in CLA, sites are updated and renovated, but there is no clear plan about who will create content and administer the site. "Some departments don't have the staff or budget that show the web is of value" (Source 2).

A clear solution here is to increase staffing and departmental budgets, but given the tight budgets that publicly funded institutions must operate under, additional funding is not a likely outcome, especially college-wide. "What we need to be doing is thinking about reorganizing current resources and rethinking what we're doing with our resources" (Source 3).

Finding CLA's Target Audience and Understanding Its Needs

Another large question facing the College is, Who is the audience? Educational websites have both external and internal audiences, but who should the target audience be and what should be known about them?

CLA's current website, for example, was created for a target audience that has since changed. Said Source 2:

"The College's site was designed to recruit faculty and graduate students. The current CLA site wasn't to recruit undergraduates or inform our students of anything. At that time, we wanted to recruit the best faculty and the best graduate students and there was money to do that. But that was a different University president and dean than we have now. So the whole ball field has changed."

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the College does not know what its audience wants, but it's clear that the user experience does not happen "in a bubble" (Source 1) and that the autonomy of departmental websites can cause much confusion for the user as they explore University of Minnesota and CLA websites (Source 2).

Undergraduate student recruitment is a critical function for the college. The web plays a pivotal role in how prospective students and parents engage with and learn about college choices and exploration (Source 3). Throughout the interviews it was suggested that the target audience of CLA websites should be prospective students. But a cohesive message is needed.

Once the College decides on a target audience, the next step is to figure out what that audience wants. More needs to be known about the audience for CLA websites. Source 3 said:

"We haven't done recent work to understand audience interest or expectation. The last time we did that was in 2006 or 2007 and it just focused on the College's website, not the entire web presence of all of the College's sites. We haven't done any recent or comprehensive work on audience. Understanding audience is a big question. It will help people understand the case for change."

And part of understanding audience needs is to understand how this audience experiences CLA websites and their messages. "As long as [users] know that they're at the University of Minnesota, do they care what college they're in? We'd like them to. But do they?" (Source 2).

Source 1 stated that a website should help answer the question, "What's in it for me?" In higher education websites, this means talking directly to students and avoiding academic writing.

Usability testing and further research regarding audience and its needs should be a high priority for CLA's strategy going forward. Answering unknowns about audience would help answer many of the questions regarding website content and messaging.

Survey

The survey results (Appendix F) provide new insights about what has been discussed throughout the literature review, content analysis and personal interviews. The survey was completed by 76 participants, 80 percent (62) of them in the 25-34 age range; 68 percent female and 32 percent male; with 93 percent of participants having a bachelor's degree or higher.

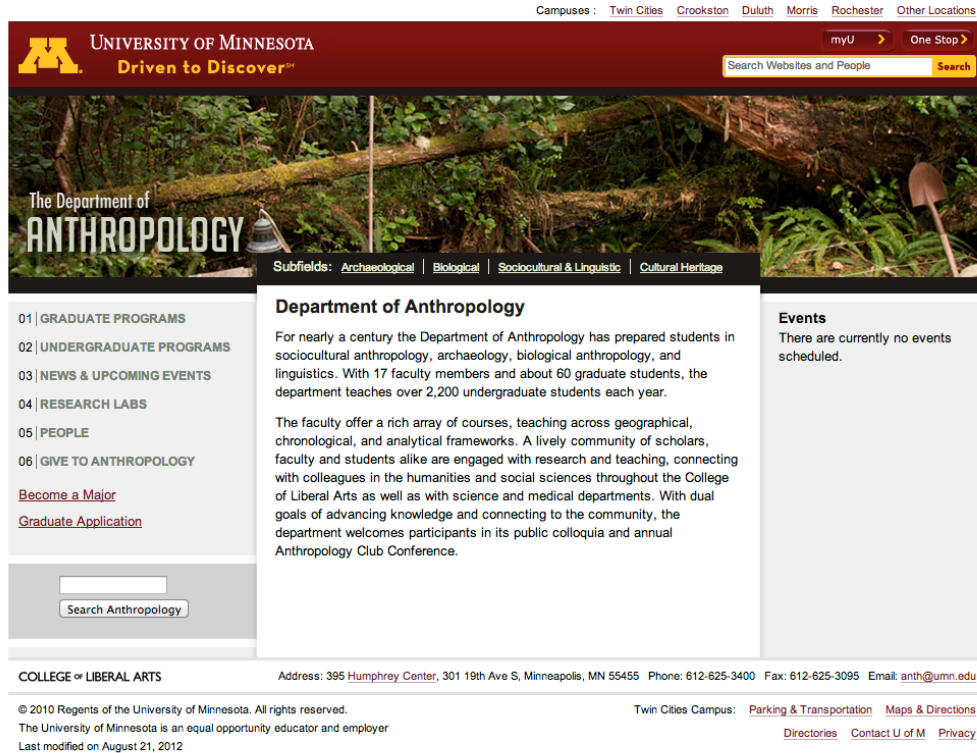
The survey further supports the importance of websites for educational institutions with 85 percent of participants saying that they are "very likely" to use a website to gather information about an educational institution. When it comes to finding out more about majors/departments within institutions, 53 percent said that their first choice for finding this information would be to seek out the University's website and find the department or major from there. Second to this, 36 percent said that they would find a departmental website through a search engine, such as Google. Nine percent of participants said that they would first seek out the College's website and find the department from there. From these results, it is suggested that 62 percent of users' first option when finding a department or major's website is to seek out a higher-level website from the College or University. This insight suggests that users are experiencing content from the University level

to the departmental level and, combined with previously mentioned research, the path from University to department should be clear and easy to follow.

To further build on this insight, data was collected from SJMC's website. In the month of February 2013, out of 2,030 visits to the homepage, 897 of those visits (44 percent) were referrals from either the University of Minnesota or College of Liberal Arts webpages (Appendix G).

The information that users are seeking on websites is different whether they are looking at the University as a whole, or at the department or major itself. Sixty-five percent of participants said that the location of the institution was "very important" when helping them decide if the University was for them. While at the departmental level, 86 percent of participants said that information on courses offered was "very important" to help them decide if the major was for them. In regards to both the University and department level, alumni stories ranked high as far as content that users were seeking, but this could be because the majority of participants were in a post-college age group.

Participants were asked to look at the below webpage:



When asked which brand the participants would associate with this webpage, 75 percent said the University of Minnesota and 25 percent said the Department of Anthropology. No respondents said that they would associate this page with the College of Liberal Arts. The branding for CLA is at the bottom of the page and the response to this question suggests that this branding is lost to the user.

Then, participants were asked to look at this webpage:



When asked which brand the participants would associate with this webpage, 49 percent said the University of Minnesota while 47 percent said the School of Social Work. Four percent said that they would associate this page with the College of Education + Human Development.

While only slightly different, these two examples suggest that clearer identification of the college at a more prominent spot on the page could go a long way to help the user know which college they are in and which collegiate brand to associate the department with.

These findings strongly suggest that users are identifying the University of Minnesota and departmental identifiers, but the college itself is lacking identity. But, to what extent do users need a department to be associated with a college? To

further explore this, participants were then asked how important it was to them that a department's website be associated with the college in which it's located, the response was less strong with 54 percent saying it was "very important" or "somewhat important." Compare this to the question in which participants were asked how important it was to them that a department's website be associated with the University in which it's located. Seventy-six percent of respondents said that this was "very important" or "somewhat important." These findings suggest that a University association is more important to users and users are split as to whether or not a collegiate identifier is needed.

When it comes to website elements explored in the content analysis, the survey found that there was less of a desire for two-way communication with nearly 50 percent of participants says this was "not important" or "a little important." In regards to a second-person tone aimed right at an audience, results were mixed, but 63 percent did say that this was "very important" or "somewhat important." Nearly 95 percent of respondents said that contact information on the homepage was "very important" or "somewhat important."

The survey strongly suggests that updated information is of the utmost important to website users. When asked about the link between organizational reputation and finding outdated information, 99 percent said that they would think less of an organization if they found outdated information on its website and 99 percent said that information on websites that is up-to-date is "very important."

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How does an inconsistent web presence across CLA affect the College's brand?

Much of this paper's research suggests that the College of Liberal Arts does not have a brand. The amount of outdated content found in the Content Analysis suggests that CLA is portraying an out-of-date and out-of-touch brand to its user.

Survey results suggest that users are associating CLA web pages with the University and department, not the College. While it is suggested that users want a department to be associated with a college, the need is not as strong as an association with the university. This begs the question, does a user truly care what college a department is located in? Or is it only the administration who cares? Further research would have to be conducted to fully understand the answer to these questions.

The content analysis suggests that CLA has an inconsistent content, message and tone throughout its departmental websites, therefore creating an unclear brand for the user. While the content analysis shows that all websites have a universal University of Minnesota header and a CLA footer, this does more to accentuate the University's reputation, not the College's, which is suggested in the survey.

The interviews suggest that an inconsistent web presence creates not only external problems regarding message, but also internal problems regarding administration, management and goals of websites. The sources stated that the College is without a brand and a clear direction. Before further analysis can be done

regarding the impact of CLA's brand, its brand needs to be clearly identified as part of a larger strategy.

The survey suggests that users need a consistent web presence throughout the University and College websites as they often start with higher-level sites to reach departmental-level sites. And it becomes clear in the survey that the College's identification is lost with its current template therefore not allowing users to associate departments with the College on digital platforms.

Ultimately, this research question cannot be fully answered because the College is without a well-defined, clear brand, and therefore the websites' influence on the brand cannot be measured.

RQ2: What do users want from websites of educational institutions?

The survey suggests a number of items that users seek in educational websites. The first is that users need a clear trail from university or college-level sites to the departmental level. Users seek out higher-level pages to reach departmental information, therefore suggesting that users need a consistent and clear user experience from these two points. Instigating the three-click rule from university- to department-level sites would cause much ease in navigation for users.

On university-level sites, users want practical information such as the location of the institution and the cost of tuition. On a departmental level, the user is looking for detailed information about what they will learn, such as course information. Student and alumni stories rank higher at the departmental level as the

user is more likely to be able to identify with the people at a departmental level versus a university level.

The survey suggests that users do want these departments to be associated with the College in which they are located in, but the need is not as strong as an association with the University.

In regards to departmental aspects examined in the content analysis, users want information to be up-to-date and they want contact information to be easily found. Users want a second-person tone directed at an audience, but the need for two-way communication is not as strong. The survey suggests that two-way communication functions would be an added bonus, but are not necessary. Further analysis would need to be done to examine whether or not users would take advantage of these.

RQ3: What changes need to be made to start the process of creating a website strategy for CLA?

Strategy is “a plan that aims to give the enterprise a competitive advantage over rivals through differentiation,” (Harvard Business Review Essentials, xiv). Strategy is not a mission, a business model or a list of objectives. Strategy is understanding what you do, what you want to become and how you plan to get there. A strategy identifies goals and direction that employees at every level can use in order to define their work and make their organization successful (Harvard Business Review Essentials, xiv). At present, the College is in the early stages of creating a strategy, but as of summer 2013 nothing has been implemented.

Websites need to be part of a larger communications strategy and throughout the interviews it becomes clear that the College is without a strategy, Strategy is more than a well-placed logo. According to Michael Porter, strategy requires a unique and valuable position, trade-offs and a fit among integrated communications (Young, 2011).

There are some steps that can be taken while a strategy is in the works. The first goal should be to complete an audit of all website content throughout the College to ensure that this content is up-to-date. This step does not need to wait for a strategy. As this is completed, a system should be created within each department to better track web content and to ensure that outdated content is not found on websites.

As part of a strategy, the College needs to fully understand and develop its brand and consider how websites fit into this strategy. How should the Collegiate strategy be implemented on websites? What messaging needs to be found on all sites to actively portray CLA's brand?

The first step in creating a strategy is to create a unique value proposition that differentiates your brand or business and creates a competitive advantage (Young, 2011). If the liberal arts is under attack (Source 2), what is the unique value proposition that CLA can offer students to give it a competitive advantage?

Second, CLA needs to decide on a target audience. Research suggests that for educational websites, this should be prospective students. When a target audience is selected, further research should be conducted to fully understand the web needs of this audience. If prospective students is chosen as the audience, the College must be

able to defend its choice as this is likely to be met with some hesitation from departments, which may rather focus on faculty or graduate research.

Third, staffing concerns must be addressed. If the College creates a strategy moving forward but it is not properly staffed to facilitate and maintain the change, the strategy will fail. Whether these staffing concerns can be addressed by simply reallocating staff remains to be seen.

Fourth, there are a number of cultural changes that need to happen throughout the College for a website strategy to survive. Web communicators, not department chairs or faculty members, must have the authority of websites and the ability to direct and lead website content and conversations. College leadership needs to be able to actively communicate this change to departmental leadership.

These items serve as suggestions for moving a strategy forward and show a suggested prioritization in creating a strategy. While these outlined steps will prove cumbersome, these changes need to be articulated for a strategy to successfully move forward.

DISCUSSION

This paper outlines the current state-of-affairs for CLA departmental websites and discusses the importance of websites in regards to both communication and effective promotion of an educational institution. This paper serves as a call-to-action for the College to point out the importance of a consistent and strong web presence. This paper also aims to assist in strategy-setting by calling

out problems that may be encountered throughout the website strategy implementation.

CLA departmental websites cannot keep operating under their current conditions, especially as the liberal arts continue to be under scrutiny and struggles to recruit students. A strong web presence is vital for attracting today's top students.

CLA is without a communications strategy, and this can be clearly seen throughout its websites. With the liberal arts under attack and students relying heavily on websites to gather information, a communications strategy needs to be seen throughout websites. A web strategy means more than all sites looking the same. A brand is more than just a logo or wordmark. And a communications strategy is more than just a cohesive website. Instead, a communications strategy across CLA sites means that the sites need to have a consistent message, audience and tone that all work together to accomplish a goal. All sites should work together to say the same message about the liberal arts and to showcase its competitive advantage.

While the College is currently in the process of creating a website strategy, much research and preparation must be done to guarantee that a strategy is created in a smart way and in a manner that can be implemented appropriately. A website strategy that does not account for the University's culture or staffing inequalities will fail. This paper aims to assist in the creation of a website strategy and to outline issues and suggestions in the process.

The personal interviews show the frustration felt throughout the College not only in creating and implementing a strategy, but with the complications that a university and college culture can add to change. The interviews suggest that many don't know what to do moving forward and how to get to a cohesive, college-wide answer that makes sense for all departments. Templates would be an easy answer, but these are met with much resistance because departments have not embraced an idea of a web presence restricted by conformity.

The Collegiate website strategy must take into account the differentiation amongst its departments. Some departments are suited to run their own websites, with communication managers on-staff and forward-thinking directors. Other departments need assistance from the College for even the smallest web changes. And other departments are without communications staff, but have ideas for their websites that do not fit into the College's current templates and limitations. The website strategy should allow for flexibility and strategic autonomy.

A brand is only as good as its products, which, in this case, are the departments and the programs of study that they offer. Strategy requires trade-offs. "Being strategic requires choices, such as determining where to allocate resources that will deliver a greater return," (Young, 2011, 39). For CLA, its products with the greatest return are those departments with a large number of majors.

In spring 2013, economics, psychology, journalism, communications and English all had more than 500 undergraduate students enrolled, with political science at nearly 500 students. Websites serve as a great tool for prospective students and they function second to campus visits in a student's research of a

school. The University of Minnesota pours great resources (staff and budget) into year-round campus tours, specialized student visits and orientations. Because websites can serve similar goals as campus visits, similar resources should be given to communications functions that work to recruit students. Focusing communication resources on these six departments would help keep these departmental brands strong and attract students.

For a communications strategy to be successful, management must ensure that people with the right skills are in the right job and that these positions are filled with people who support the strategy and have resources to do their job well (Harvard Business Essentials, 2005, 66). The fact that only one of these departments (journalism) has a communications manager on staff speaks for the lack of appropriate communications staff among what could be considered the College's most valuable departments.

Skilled staff in these departments could help portray the competitive advantage of the College and would be able to commit to and understand the strategy implemented by the College.

It's vital for these departments to stand out. Often these departments turn to the websites of their competitors for content or design ideas. This further complicates the problem because it pushes departments into a "silo" mentality. With communications-focused staff, these departments could implement new ideas to keep up with competitors, but with a trained communications person, these ideas could be implemented with the Collegiate strategy in mind. At present, departments

have yet to understand the importance of a cohesive strategy throughout the College, but a focused communications staff person could help remedy this.

There are departments for which templates make sense for their communication needs and could be used by smaller departments, but any templates moving forward should allow for flexibility and adaptation.

SUGGESTED FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

This study experienced a number of limitations that serve as suggestions for future research. First, the author was without the opportunity to survey prospective students (ages 16-18), which is suggested throughout research as the target audience for educational websites. Future research should focus on connecting with this group, especially in regards to user experience. A focus group or survey of this specific group would be helpful to better understand this target audience's needs regarding web communication.

Second, there was a lack of access to CLA departmental website data to allow for further analysis of website activity. The author solely had data from the School of Journalism & Mass Communication's website analytics. Analyzing data across departments would help communicators understand which pages are getting the most views within departments and to better understand which pages are in need of resources.

Future research and analysis of CLA's brand needs to be completed to move forward with a strategy. CLA administration needs to decide if it wants to build CLA's brand and use it with conviction or if it's OK that the College is without a

strong brand. When the College decides on a brand, leadership needs to use and understand the brand's conviction and enforce it with clarity. There must be added value of the meaning of the brand. Without that, the brand is just simply a communications marker without associated feelings. Future research should focus on whether or not the College's brand needs to be strong and whether or not prospective students care what college departments are located in.

Websites are just one aspect of CLA's brand and story and therefore it must be mentioned that a website strategy needs to be part of a larger communications strategy that effectively tells the story of the College.

Lastly, there was a strong tendency for bias in this paper as the author is closely associated with the subject matter.

CONCLUSION

Websites prove to be a vital tool for student recruitment and should therefore be a top priority in regards to staffing and funding. The stability and consistency of CLA websites is crucial for student recruitment, user experience and the College's communications and branding strategies. To be competitive and attractive, CLA departmental websites must have a cohesive, consistent strategy and must focus on a particular audience.

The first task that must be considered is the creation of a website and branding strategy for CLA. The College needs a brand to stand out among competitors and to help portray its story, both internally and externally. With a

strategy, communicators will be able to decide more easily what the goals of the College are and how their departments fit into this strategy.

In deciding the role of departments in this strategy, it should be taken into account that some departments are in need of a strategy different than other departments. CLA needs to take a look at what the College's strongest products (i.e., majors) are and use this to decide which departments are in need of resources to help implement a College-wide strategy and to ensure that these departments are properly implementing strategy.

With the importance of web communication in regards to student recruitment and research, websites must be current and have the best content possible, as this content is accessible by everyone. Prospective students rely on educational websites to explore educational institutions and opportunities and CLA can no longer afford to have an inconsistent web presence that portrays an out-of-date brand. Creating a strategy that differentiates CLA from its competitors and gives the College a competitive advantage will allow its websites to have a clear message and for CLA's brand to shine through.

REFERENCES

- Bitler, D., Rankin, W. and Schrass, J. (Sept. 2000). Academic Affairs Online: A Survey of Information Available on Websites in Higher Education. *College Student Journal*. 34(3), 325-334.
- Brunner, B. and Brown, M.H. Web sights: Images of Diversity on College and University Homepages. Conference paper, presented to the National Communication Association, 2007.
- Bullwinkle, Kristeen. "Communicating for Focus, Distinction and Efficiency" Presented as part of the CLA Web Charette. January 13, 2013.
- Chang, C. (2012) Is that website for me? Website-self-congruency effects triggered by visual designs. *International Journal of Advertising*. 31(4), 835-860.
- Collins, D. and Rukstad, M. (April 2008) Can You Say What Your Strategy Is? Harvard Business Review, 82-90.
- Gordon, J. and Berhow, S. (2009). University websites and dialogic features for building relationships with potential students. *Public Relations Review*. 35, 150-152.
- Groneman Hite, N. and Railsback, B. (Fall 2010) Analysis of the content and characteristics of university websites with implications for web designers and educators. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*. 107-113
- Harvard Business Essentials. (2005). "Strategy: Create and Implement the Best Strategy for Your Business." Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass. xiv, 66, 67, 72.
- Himmelboim, I. and McCreery, S. (2012) New technology, old practices: Examining news websites from a professional perspective. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research Into New Media Technologies*. 18(4), 427-444.
- Kang, S. and Norton, H. (2004) Nonprofit organizations' use of the World Wide Web: are they sufficiently fulfilling organizational goals? *Public Relations Review*. 30, 279-284
- Kang, S. and Norton, H. (2006). Colleges and universities' use of the World Wide Web: A public relations tool for the digital age. *Public Relations Review*, 32(4), 1-4.
- Morris, P. Website use and the relationship of image on the organization. Conference paper, presented to the International Communication Association, 2003.
- Norris, S. (2012) "University websites fail to click with prospective students." *Education Journal*, 145, 6-7.

Poock, M. and Lefond, D. (Summer 2001). How college-bound prospects perceive university web sites: Findings, implications and turning browsers into applications. *C & U Journal*, 15-21.

Pirouz, R. (1997) "Click here." New Riders Publishing, Indianapolis, IN., 66-76; 88-103; 142-143.

Sicilia, M., Ruiz, S. and Reynolds, N. (2006) Attitude formation online: How the consumer's need for cognition affects the relationship between attitude towards the website and attitude towards the brand. *International Journal of Market Research*, 48(2), 139-154.

Source 1. (2013, March 19). Personal interview.

Source 2 (2013, March 25). Personal interview.

Source 3. (2013, April 4). Personal interview.

Van Der Geest, T. and Spyridakis, J. (Aug. 2000) Developing Heuristics for Web Communication: An Introduction to This Special Issue. *Technical Communication*. 47(3), 301-311.

Will, E.M. and Callison, C. (2006) Web presence of universities: Is higher education sending the right message online? *Public Relations Review*. 32, 180-183

Young, A. (2011) "Brand Media Strategy." Palgrave Macmillan, New York. 2nd Edition, 39.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Kristeen Bullwinkle presentation (selected slide)



Observations

- No central message; no real messaging except on a very few pages
- Lack of understanding of target audiences; no “conversion funnel.”
- Lack of ownership
- Lack of prioritization
- Suspected lack of resources and funding

APPENDIX B

Codebook for Content Analysis

- Look at 34 departmental webpages that offer majors within the College of Liberal Arts.
- Goal: To get an overview of features and content found on CLA websites as recommended by literature review.
- Unit of analysis: website
- Timeframe: Conducted content analysis May 7, 2013
- Themes: Looking for content, user features and status of information

University of Minnesota/CLA branding on homepage

0=no

1=yes

Contact info found within 3 clicks (includes phone and email)

0=no

1=yes

“Role” pages

(Refers to pages for “prospective students” or “alumni” being present as opposed to task-based pages)

0=no

1=yes

Outdated information found

0=no

1=yes

Last Update of Homepage (from “last modified” timestamp on homepage)

1=May 7-April 30, 2013

2=April 29-23, 2013

3=April 22-16, 2013

4=April 15-9, 2013

5=April 8-2, 2013

6=April 1 or later (site homepage has not been updated in past month)

Consistent language that speaks to prospective student

(Evidence of “you”-type language, talks about program/experience)

0=no

1=yes

Method for two-way communication

(discussion forums, chat functions, feedback forms)

0=no
1=yes

Communications manager/staff person
0=no
1=yes

APPENDIX C

Content Analysis Results

Department	web address	UMN/CLA branding on homepage	Contact Info Found Within 3 clicks	"Role" pages (prospective students, alumni, etc)	Outdated information found	Last modified time stamp	Language found that "speaks" to prospective students	Method for two-way communication (discussion forums, chat functions, feedback forms)	Communications Manager on staff
African American & African Studies	http://aaas.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
American Indian Studies	http://amin.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0
American Studies	http://americanstudies.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	1	0
Anthropology	http://anthropology.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	1	0
Art	https://art.umn.edu/	1	1	1	1	1	6	0	0
Art History	http://arthist.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	0
Asian Lang & Literatures	http://all.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Chicano & Latino Studies	http://chicano.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	2	1	0
Classical and Near Eastern Studies	http://cnes.cla.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Communication Studies	http://comm.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature	http://cscl.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	2	1	0
Economics	http://www.econ.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
English	http://english.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
French and Italian	http://frit.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies	http://gwss.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Geography, Environment and Society	http://www.geog.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	3	0	0
German, Scandinavian and Dutch	http://gsd.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	0
History	http://www.hist.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
Jewish Studies	http://jwst.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Journalism and Mass Comm	http://jmc.umn.edu/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Linguistics	http://linguistics.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	6	1	0
Music	https://music.umn.edu/	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Philosophy	http://philosophy.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Political Science	http://www.polisci.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	3	1	0
Psychology	http://www.psych.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Religious Studies	http://religiousstudies.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	4	1	0
Slavic Languages and Literatures	http://sl.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	0
Sociology	http://www.soc.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	4	1	0
Spanish & Portuguese Studies	http://spanport.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	4	0	0
Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences	http://slhs.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Statistics	http://www.stat.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Theatre Arts and Dance	https://theatre.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	1	6	0	0
Urban Studies	http://urbanstudies.umn.edu/	1	1	1	1	1	6	0	0
Writing Studies	http://writingstudies.umn.edu/	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	0

APPENDIX D: Personal Interviews

SOURCE 1

Service Management Coordinator, CLA-OIT

Interview. March 19, 2013 at 2 p.m.

1. First off, tell me about your job and role here. (mostly so I know where you're coming from)
2. What do you think is the greatest strength of websites?
3. In your opinion, how do websites for educational institutions differ from other websites (entertainment, etc)?
 - a. What additional features are needed?
 - b. How does the impact of multiple stakeholders affect the content, design, infrastructure, and so on?
4. What research has been done to understand the audience of CLA's websites? Who do you think we should be talking to?
5. How does the infrastructure of CLA-OIT affect the department's ability to maintain, update, etc CLA's websites?
 - a. How will moving to marketing and PR help with this?
6. Currently, there seems to be a charge to change CLA-OIT and the way websites are handled within CLA.
 - a. What started this initiative?
 - b. Why do you think it's necessary?
 - c. What steps are being taken now?
 - d. What is the timeline for this project?
7. What do you see as the biggest problems within or amongst CLA websites?
 - a. What are the barriers to fixing those problems?
 - b. What is needed to fix these problems?
8. Are there any colleges within the U or other Universities that you think are a model for good web communication?

TRANSCRIPT:

Started in 2005. There was no branding. We had some websites without a University wordmark. There wasn't any coordination across departments. It wasn't in people's minds to have conversations with other departments and think about what other departments were doing.

Saw that websites were painstaking for the student workers and project management was needed. KS created a project outline.

Getting departments to think about content. "Content is more important than your visual design." Thinking about audience and usability testing.

Still not very well funded and without support. Some departments have more funding and strategy than other. Not equitable across departments. The college doesn't have a clear strategy. A lot of the recent research tells us that it really starts with our strategy. People in departments are not yet comfortable to talk about a collegiate strategy as opposed to just a departmental strategy.

We need to do more research and talk to our audience, our students. Ask them what their experience was like. Departments don't live in a bubble when it comes to user experience. As a student it's challenging to understand all of the silos and how things fit together. People are less patient with searching.

There have been some discussions with units like admissions, but we're not working together as partners to facilitate that user experience.

My perspective in IT with the IT alignment, we're throwing away that we're CLA-OIT, we're all in IT. It's not us and them. The idea is that we all provide IT services to customers and we all want to work together. We've been living in this for a little while. We're trying to work together and collaborate. When working separate, it doesn't seem like it's serving us well. Similar alignment happening within communications.

Everyone is doing everything 50 different ways and not working together. I don't know how to change that culture though. It needs to happen though.

Who really should determine what's on the website?

A website should help answer the question, "What's in it for me?" to the audience. In higher ed websites, they say you should talk to the students. Saying "you." Many of our websites are written very academically.

Everything is mobile, your website is your real estate, what is most important for the user to see?

Why are chairs, faculty, etc the decision-makers? Culture? It's been that way? It doesn't really matter if you have the expertise, it's still the loudest or "most important" people who make the decisions.

Requirements from U Relations: Global headers and footers. Most of our websites meet the accessibility standards. That's the minimum. We should be partnering with

U Relations as they continue to create a responsive template. We should be partnering with OIT as they work on content management systems.

Anybody at the U doing websites well: College of Education and Human Development. Very different model. They have a particular look. They meet the branding standards. They have departments, but you still see that you're in the college, the website looks a certain way. Same look, same navigation, can easily get back to college. There's a family resemblance. They use different colors but you can still navigate across sites. To me, that's more successful if you think that the user goes across sites. And every site lives within CEHD's main site (web address is cedh.umn.edu/department).

Within CLA our sites have so many layers. So the question is, do we need everything that we have online? Are we just serving our department or is the college working together? I don't know how realistic it would be to push for something like that.

When you think about large organizations like Target, Best Buy, any huge corporation, that's just how it is. It all lives within a main site. They still have critical information online.

There is no collegiate strategy. It's all very departmental. Does the college's strategy come first? I don't know how we're going to get away with not coming together, especially given that the communications alignment is happening.

I keep thinking about CLA 2015. The college went through the trouble of creating these strategies and priorities and ideas and then didn't staff it. We come up with great ideas but don't plan or follow-through. There is a lack of execution.

If you can imagine a CLA where there were collegiate priorities, that helps you figure out who the audience is and what the strategy is and what the goals are.

Everyone thinks they need their own freestanding site. Goes back to an old way of thinking, just because we have the web and anything can go up there, but how do you navigate that?

No department, center or the college itself does not have an archival solution. Old, outdated stuff confuses the user and harms our brand. Amongst faculty and some leaders, "brand" can have a negative connotation.

Just because one person wants it online, it can't come down. Some people within the University don't understand that old information does nobody any good.

In my dream world, every one of these departments has someone owning the content. That is specifically their job. It can vary based on department.

Web is not the most important thing to most departments. We're still working in a reactive world in the web, we're not proactive.

Need to change the culture a bit. Need to teach people that branding is a good thing. In the future, there will be more branding rules. Why wouldn't you want to be part of the University brand?

It's not unique to the U, which works to our disadvantage. Because if you're in a department here, you look at your competitors who are having the same problem we are and their sites exist in a bubble as well.

We have policies now. We have to have the branding. We have to have accessible websites. Those policies have helped us greatly.

The move to Media & PR gives the web team credibility. Going from a free for all for the web team to support to "we can't be everything to everyone, we have to be strategic." Hopefully there will become some new best practices and there will be hopefully a new college website showing how CLA will present themselves online. It's up to Jennifer and that team to decide where that lands and what that looks like. Does it just mean a new template? I don't know.

The vice presidents are being charged with making these changes, so things will happen fast. 2-3 years, which is fast for University of Minnesota time. This time, they mean business.

At this point, three months later, the Charette is losing its credibility. I'm hoping that whatever changes are going to happen are happening before the end of the calendar year.

The strategy is the most critical thing. We just need to come to an understanding of what that is.

Having the website there to tell the stories. We are not telling our best story. I don't think we're even telling the best CLA story. Conflict between department, college and University...who's story should we be telling? We should have some real conversations with students to see what they need on our sites. We aren't doing much with analytics. We have the data. People assume that it's OK that educational websites don't adhere to a brand, but we should take a page from corporations. It would add legitimacy.

We need a toolkit. Templates. Better records of what's been done. So people can have those tools and can turn to them. When leadership turns over, we don't have to start from scratch every time.

SOURCE 2

Interview, March 25, 2013

1. First off, tell me about your role in CLA Media & PR and how it relates to the web (mostly so I know where you're coming from)
2. What do you think is the greatest strength of websites?
3. In your opinion, how do websites for educational institutions differ from other websites (entertainment, etc)?
 - a. What additional features are needed?
 - b. How does the impact of multiple stakeholders affect the content, design, infrastructure, etc?
4. What is the audience for CLA's website? Why?
5. In your opinion, what is the connection between CLA's website and the websites of the multiple departments across CLA?
 - a. Should they all "match"?
 - b. What features should be on all sites?
6. What do you think is the greatest strength of CLA's website?
7. In what ways does CLA use its website to help reach prospective students?
8. What is the biggest "problem" with CLA's website?
 - a. What are the barriers to fixing these problems?
 - b. What is needed to fix these problems?
9. What does it mean for CLA's website and the departmental websites that the web team is moving to Media & PR.
 - a. Now viewed as a "communications" tool, is that a good thing or is it just IT "passing the buck?"
 - b. What will connection between communications team and IT be to get work done?

TRANSCRIPT:

College of Liberal Arts Web Editor. I manage the content of the College's site and it has developed and is tangential because I have a role in email marketing and social media for the College. Web is just a portion of what I do but I am in charge of all content on CLA's site.

Not one of us in this office is an expert in any one area (such as email marketing). We're lightly staffed.

When I was originally hired in 2007, part of my job was going to be creating content but we've lost a lot of staff so as far as the actual content goes it's been difficult to come up. I'm never writing anything, I'm just shepherding content. But with many of the departmental magazines that have gone away, a lot of that content has gone away. My job has moved more to content strategy not content creation.

The greatest strength of websites is that people are still always referring back to websites. If you want the meat, you go to the website. The website is the "paper" of our world. They're mobile, you can bring them anywhere, you can share them with anyone and you can change it when you need to. Those are great strengths. You need that link. It's a way to bring things together to tell a story. That can be really powerful.

What do people want from an educational institution? Practical things like how you apply and what you need for your major. So that's different than something like product sites. But then there's also having to manage who you are to the public. And right now the liberal arts are under attack. Is it losing its strength? Now there is a lot of pressure on liberal education to prove yourself and what value do you have. We haven't been bothering to tell that story. So now we need to start doing that, branding ourselves and selling the liberal arts. We just have to decide who we are and what that message is to give to the public. Are we selling to our audience? In a way, yes, but our websites can't just be marketing tools. Our audiences are very savvy. We need to be genuine about who we are. In another way, we're not like a nonprofit because we don't have a heartwarming mission in a way. So what are you appealing to? Are you appealing to nostalgia? Are you appealing to the "rah rah" of education? It feels like a unique niche, any kind of school. Higher education in a way has its own niche that you have to tell your story, have to promote who you are, have to be genuine. We need information about what certain constituencies want from us? Since 2008, we need to be telling our story about students getting jobs and that school is expensive. There is that disconnect between what they really want and what they respond to.

There are all of the different channels to take into account. They may go directly to the departmental website, or the Discover CLA website or the college's website.

Discover CLA website:

We had the dean Steven Rosenstone here, we had a director of communications and we had a student recruiter. The college's site the way it was was that the prospective student material was really buried and we wanted to be sure that they saw it. CLA was the only college who didn't have a focus on prospective students on its website. So the people wanted to have the opportunity to talk to prospective students and really tell that CLA story. So I helped write it and an outside firm designed it. We launched in 2008, so that was my project. Now we have a prospective student person who wants a new design. Of all of our sites it has the most "brand-y" stuff in it. It's trying to tell the value of this particular college. Why liberal arts and why liberal arts here are some of the questions it's trying to answer

for people but not overwhelm them. Try to answer some of the questions people have like where am I going to live and what is this going to cost but without all of the details.

Why a separate site instead of being combined into the CLA website. We were going to start recruiting students from outside of MN, Chicago area in particular. The site was designed in 2007 to recruit faculty and graduate students. The current CLA site wasn't to recruit undergraduates or inform our students of anything. At that time we wanted to recruit the best faculty and the best graduate students and there was money to do that. Bruiniks and Rosenstone, that was their initiative. "Driven to Discover." But they're gone now and that whole ball field has changed.

The undergraduate thing just kind of got squished in there, but we haven't done anything with that section because what should it say? So it got all separated. And now it'd be nice to be "rowing with the same oars in the same direction." Maybe it's time to bring it all back together. But we also had different offices with different reporting structures running some of this stuff. So student services has their own domain and content management system so we don't have access to that. Everything is separate and that's frustrating. They were built separate because they had a different purpose and we didn't want to "muddy" that. The different audiences. You have so much you want to say to prospective students, you have a site within a site.

Connection between CLA sites and departmental sites, should they all look alike? I would love to understand what it's like for our students. If I'm a student and I come here and go to the admission site and it looks a certain way and then I go to Discover CLA site and it works this other way and then I go to the department site. Is there enough for our students to understand? As long as they know that they're at the University of Minnesota, do they care what college they're in? We'd like them to. But I don't know. I think it did help to have the web team add universal headers and footers, at least there's that piece. But I don't know what that would be like (if they all looked the same).

I worked here from 96-03 when the University was just building its first sites and it really was the Wild Wild West. Every department and college went and got their own designer and there was no idea that we should centralize all of this. And in some ways the departments are closer to their students and their audiences and what they need to do to run. If a website is a repository of information that they need, then the departments know what it needed (forms, hours, etc). A lot of times the web team is included after the department has decided what they want their site to look like, so the web team wasn't included in any strategy conversations. So when you'd get into the department's content, you can see how they function, but it doesn't fit in with the college. I don't think the college would be smart to start telling departments how to function but I do think that departments are sometimes missing opportunities in the way that they are structured. I don't think we're doing nearly enough usability testing and talking to people about what they want and need. It would be a huge project.

What is the greatest strength of CLA's website? The homepage, having a nice place to tell a story. I don't think our site is very strong at all though because it's original purpose (design, layout, etc) is gone. We desperately want to re-do the site. I am not sure how to get this moving forward. You have to spend all of your time asking, "do we have a brand? Who are we?" All of that fundamental work needs to be done first and I really want to do it right. But we need that research and we just don't have it. We need to know who comes to our sites, what they need, what the departments needs, what those staff needs are, what our students need.

I think there's a decent understanding of what we need. We need a brand, we need to figure out where we are going, we need to figure out what those most important messages are that we want out there, and figure out what the website needs to say to support those things. It needs to be part of an overall strategy. This is just one tool. It doesn't feel like it is going to happen in three months. In the meantime, things just get older and older.

CLA-OIT and updating site. I use contribute. To update main feature I have to contact web team. We use U think blogs to feed the news. But I can add stories through contribute as well. Reach is a really big project I have to work on the web team with. It's a combination of them and the news blog. Discover CLA is a combination of contribute and the web team. We try to do as much as we can and not try to bog down the web team. That relationship worked for a while. But now I see all of the work that is expected of the web team and it's a lot.

We still need to figure out if we're going to drupal or something else. The relationship up to this point was that they built our sites and gave us our structure and we manage it and send in requests. At one point the web building stuff belonged over here in this building, where CLA-OIT built the sites but then someone was doing the content. So CLA-OIT ran the site but you had a communications person making stories happen and then that switched. All of CLA-OIT went to IT. So is a website technology first and words second, or the other way around? So there has been a close relationship, but nobody reports to anyone else. We're partners. So it's interesting having them come back here. It's all a communications function.

What are the biggest problems?

Lack of strategy and a lack of ownership. Who owns this content and who is responsible for making it happen? When CLA's site was being built, they knew what they wanted it to look like and how it was going to work, but nobody knew who was going to create this content. Then a lot of the departmental magazines went away and we lost a lot of content. So some of the biggest problem are ownership and communication. We never talk to the different departments. We don't get to see everybody and we don't meet regularly with the departments. A lot of times we don't know where the depts are coming from and what their problems are. One of the challenges in managing the web team is going to be providing good solutions because you have to know what these depts are working with. Communications is a

problem too in that a lot of times we don't know who to contact. Leadership in that we need to know that this is a priority and knowing that we're going to figure that out. The charette was a great first step but it needs to continue. With the dean leaving, this is a big project to put on his chief of staff. We worry that it will lose momentum. Or maybe it will move on due to spite. Jennifer is of the mind that it has to keep moving forward. Our departments are such a gamut of subjects and the staffing they have is so different. Some departments don't have the staff or budget that show that the web is of value. I don't want to take everything over, but there are some instances in which it would make more sense for the college to take things over, but we'd need more people. Department chairs shouldn't be worried about the website, but they do. And then we need to understand why those department chairs care so much about the site and its content.

Do you see more staff?

All I hear is that things are tight and that things will continue to be tight. Our staff meetings sometimes don't get at those fundamental questions or there's no time to talk about it. Every now and again I think we should do less but we do it well. So the site is smaller. But then we need to know what the most important functions are. Is it telling stories? Is it social media? Is it media pitches? Then we need expertise in those areas. And we need a strategy to tell us what those things are.

As far as implementing strategy, I read about that all of the time. But I would love to see what people have done with strategy. You always hear about the strategy, but we never hear about the implementation.

Things are changing a lot. I have no idea where things will be in a year. But some things change and other things do not change. The dean can say that web is a priority and departments can't hide from this. Dean Parente said that, but now he's leaving. And maybe the people who needed to hear that weren't in the room.

SOURCE 3

1. To start, tell me about your role within the college/dean's office and how this factors into media & PR and the web team.
2. Why do you think strategy is important on the web?
 - a. Why is strategy important for educational institutions especially?
 - i. What else needs to be taken into consideration?
3. What do you think is the connection between the college's brand and its websites?
 - a. Is the web a legitimate connection between departmental websites and the college's brand?
 - b. Is the brand currently "hurt" by the condition of CLA websites?

4. Why does the college think that now is the time to act on its websites?
5. Where is the process at now? What steps are being taken?
6. What is CLA's plan for this "web renovation" project?
 - a. Timeline?
 - b. Budget?
 - c. Staff?
7. Has any research been done about what audiences want from our websites?
 - a. Who is the main audience? Students? Donors? Alumni? Faculty?
8. What are the next steps moving forward?

TRANSCRIPT

Chief of Staff. The dean implemented a restructure of the college in 2009 and I moved into that role. I have two chief responsibilities: to serve as the dean's right-hand person and to provide leadership for the deans office and to provide leadership to the college's media and PR team. Liaison to University Relations.

The web team has really had its center of gravity in the CLA Office of Information Technology up until now. This spring we are in the process of shifting that to the media and PR ground and moving its function into a communications function. Web team currently has professional staff vacancies. Dan Kunitz leaving precipitated a bit of the conversation and accelerated the movement. Been talking with head of CLA OIT, about how web has moved from a more technical function to a critical communications function. Dan's departure made us realize that it was time to start moving on some things. The charette was helpful in terms of helping the college to understand web as a communications function and not just a technology function. People often associated web team with technology and technology-related but this is a realigning and repackaging of web as a critical part of communications. Right now we have student designers in Johnston Hall, adjacent to media and PR. Now am taking the learnings of the charette and thinking about the strategic environment for the web in a larger communications functions. I'll be putting together a plan for a realignment of web more squarely into the communications function of the college. It's a realignment. One of the things you see is that department website have such autonomy. Some of the work is guided by best practices but the degree of autonomy granted to departments around the web has been very high. We're a big college with a lot of volume. We've never had a space where we provide guidelines. We are stewards of the University's brand but we have only done a few things around articulating a college brand.

In early 2000s, the college itself really had invested very little in communications. There was some web functioning, but at that point it was really not grounded. Around 2004/5 the dean at that time started to invest in the college's communication function. There wasn't really a charge or the resources to think about it.

Communications alignment, just good timing?

President announced operational excellence in September 2012 and communications was one of those four functional areas to focus on (IT, financial, HR, communications). In some sense our discussions about realigning the web team into the communications team pre-date the president's announcement. But it does help the case for alignment. And emerges the conversation. I see it as harmonic. We were probably going down this path before it launched, but it does set the stage for the right kind of conversation. It does set a different environment.

Diana Harvey working on communications alignment. Started with central. Now working on collegiate level, speaking with administrators.

Why is strategy important for web communication?

I see web as a part of an integrated storytelling vehicle for the college. And a really powerful one. Undergraduate student recruitment is a really critical function for the college. The environment has really changed for both the University and CLA. Liberal Arts face more critical assessment. Public attitudes about the value of higher education. The level of state public support for higher education has changed. Declining demographics pay a role. And it's a competitive market with all of the private colleges in the Twin Cities. We know the web plays a pivotal role in how prospective students and parents engage with and learn about college choices and exploration. We knew that we needed to have a key strategic vision for what we wanted to accomplish and it's clear that web plays a pivotal role in that. A web environment conducive to mobile is important as well. Without a strategy around that we could have just missed the boat and not done something as impactful and focused. In general it's imperative for colleges and universities to be more strategic. Especially today, with scarce resources and less favorable public opinion. Without a strategy it's very easy to say yes to everything. If you don't have a strategy, I don't know how you would ever make choices. The formulation of a strategy with help us focus and target resources.

Kristeen's presentation really lays out the hazards in the current state of affairs. We've got some significant problems. There is no cohesive message. We don't tell stories about why we exist, why we're special. As much as different units feel a level of autonomy, in essence we are all linked together and we're all mutually dependent. We need to have some strategies that advance mutual interest.

Project last year that made strides in strategy: Discover CLA website. Targeted, intense work in summer 2012. Geared at undergraduate student recruitment. Audience-specific site. Really streamlined content. Focused on key messages. Really

thought about what students are looking for and what they want. Made it accessible on mobile devices. Really tried to simplify and create an compelling look and feel that would speak to that audience. We knew what the strategic environment was calling for and what some of the opportunities and threats facing the college were.

CLA 2015 is a very important strategy setting document for the college and it guides a lot of our work. CLA will play a part of the strategy. It will inform and has a compelling and accurate analysis of the issues facing the college.

There have been a couple of major things that have absorbed my time, so I'm just now getting back into the strategy mindset.

I really see fall as a time when formalization and articulation and consultation of the strategy would happen. We have a dean transition and an interim dean coming on board. That would be a good thing to engage an interim dean in. Summertime is not the time to talk about culture change and strategic initiatives. Faculty are gone and students are absent. Between now and the fall is a time to get ready and do planning.

Four or five action groups that came out of the charette. Two that have made the most in-roads that will make progress and help in strategy.

1. Practitioners group

2. Working group that has tackled how do we promote the liberal arts and tackling the "brand."

Want to maintain momentum gained by charette. I do want to maintain engagement and gauge the community.

Using an outside firm is under consideration. May help us move forward in a smart and pragmatic way. Using some outside help may be savvy.

What is the connection between the college's brand and its website?

I think the college's brand is not at its full maturation. It has been articulated and expressed in some venues, but the use of the word "brand" can be volatile in the academic community. So I'm not sure if we've had that formal conversation about what our brand is and how we can use it. We do have something that is operative but it's not as powerful or as articulated or universally adopted as it could be.

We've done some work around visual and graphic identity stuff. We've made some progress in that arena. We've done quite a bit with the University's brand and Driven to Discover and applying that in a universal way.

We haven't done recent work to understand audience interest or expectation. The last time we did that in 2006/7, it was just focused on the college's website, not the entire web presence of all of the college's sites. We haven't done any recent or comprehensive work on audience. Understanding audience is a big question on my

mind and wondering how we can approach that. It will help people understand the case for change.

I do think there is a legitimate connection between college website and brand, especially for undergraduate students and their families. That's one audience that I would imagine is moving throughout all of our site and they are some of our more well-traveled audiences among the sites. I do think that they experience a discontinuous experience in our website. There is no integrated user experience. My instincts are that that is a connection you want to build on. There could be a powerful opportunity to showcase the college's brand and see how these departments fit in.

Is it hurt? Yes, our impact is diminished.

Political science page, why political science is part of the liberal arts page.

We don't provide guidelines. There are things though where we're making progress. Second language education, working to articulate very student-oriented presentation about why you study a second language in liberal arts. Creating template language.

CLA Student Services. We're making inroads here and there but it isn't part of an integrated approach. That's where there is opportunity.

What other parts of communication do you see changing around a strategy? One of the things that the MPR team and I have talked about is being more content driven and what that would look like and what that would take. People have really strong interest in that. The past 4-5 years have been very challenging from a financial perspective. There have been significant reductions in communication functions. We lost resources that generate new content (departmental magazines). We try to repurpose content and glean as much impact from other people's stories about us. As we think about web being a part of a more integrated part of telling the college's story, we need a good storytelling strategy and good engines around content generation. I see us trying to identify more resources so we have more content we can use.

It's not just about content development but we need content management and maintenance. Having a thoughtful approach to all of that would be important. It's an important question to ask, how much can we sustain? And what is the right resource base and infrastructure for us to have a vibrant web presence and accomplish our goals. In this large college, how do we want to approach that? There is only a handful of communications expertise at a department level. We need to think about what is right for the college and how much content we really need? How much training and resources can we provide? The variety across the college can be a real challenge. Most staff that I talk to in the college feel really busy and the work keeps growing. We don't always have the resources to handle those concerns. There could

be opportunities to rethink how we approach the web environment and roles and responsibilities. I imagine that will be part of the work plan.

It's not a good time to ask for incremental resources. What we need to be doing is thinking about reorganizing current resources and rethinking what we're doing. That may mean reducing website content so that maintenance isn't as difficult. We're not in a period of time in which the college's resources are growing, so we need to be more thoughtful and strategic about how we're using current resources. I'm hoping that moving the web team to MPR will provide some efficiencies. Just being in the same office allows for good idea flow and creativity and problem solving in a more efficient manner. I've got some one-time resources to help us get through our "web renovation," but they're not recurring. So it's not something you could plan on.

Do you see a day in which all CLA websites look uniform?

I don't have a vision for something that would be uniform. There is some room for similar templates and colors. I think we could move to more standardization and there could be some good rationales and outcomes for that. I would hope that we maintain a level of flexibility because that is part of the beauty and identity of this place. I have a "gray area" vision at this point, but I suspect there is more we could be doing to provide a more basic framing with options for flexibility. If we can think about audience and user and what's important for them. An integrated user experience is important so we need to think about the user and why you have this site in the first place.

The universal UMN branding on websites is still a powerful concern years after being implemented. Some feel it compromises the artistic abilities and identity of the department. So to imagine a world where there are templates and therefore decisions are able to be made quickly, it could increase efficiency a great deal.

A budget crisis can be opportunity for change. There could be a much more streamlined and standardized environment, but I can see the writing on the wall about that too.

We're not using a content management system across the college, so we are considering Drupal. But it is just another tool at the moment.

There is an opportunity for leadership statements about what we are going to do and why. That could make a lot of people's lives simpler.

I have a hard time getting a handle on the level of ownership and engagement at a departmental level. My instincts are that some people care a lot and it's a strong interpretation of who they are.

To the degree that we can become more oriented toward analytics and assessment the better. That would be a culture change. That will be an element of the vision that

Diana Harvey has for the state of communication at the U. More outcome oriented and metric based. It just makes good sense, but it will be an area of growth and change. That would support strategic thinking. Our baseline understanding of stuff often isn't real good.

What are the next steps moving forward? Timeline?

My next step is returning to the outcomes of the charette and thinking about how to nurture those steps moving forward. I've been working with the MPR team about charette outcomes and web team integration and identifying key action items.

There is a strategic set of work and an operation set of work and I'm trying to figure out how to sequence both of them. I really feel a strong obligation to follow up on charette. One of the things to come out of that was that we need some answers from leadership, and we have leadership transition.

If we do implement strategies, we need answers about why? What's our process? What are the implications for units? And we need to have that community conversation.

The fall is a wonderful opportunity to start to make some major progress on advancing. I'm thinking about whether or not there is research or analysis we need to do over the summer. Whether it's around audience and users or doing more of the quantitative data assessment.

On the operational side, what kind of staffing arrangement needs to be put in place around web? What are the services we're going to provide between now and when the strategic vision is set? We may need an interim six-month plan about what we can provide.

APPENDIX E

Survey

**Capstone Survey
**

Thank you for your participation in this survey, which seeks to find the connection between the websites of educational institutions and its brand and asks the user to determine what features of educational websites are preferred.

The survey assumes that you use websites and online tools, given that you are viewing this survey online. If this is not the case, please exit the survey.

All information is confidential and anonymous.

Thank you for your time. Please hit "next" to begin the survey.

*** 1. When researching a postsecondary educational institution (such as a University), how likely are you to use that institution's website to gather information?**

Not likely at all Neutral Very likely

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

*** 2. When looking for information about a specific major or department within a University, please rank the methods you would use for finding that major or department's webpage. (1=most likely to use, 5=least likely to use)**

<input type="text"/>	Search Engine (such as Google or Bing)
<input type="text"/>	Seek out University's website and find dept/major from there
<input type="text"/>	Seek out College's website and find dept/major from there
<input type="text"/>	Social Media (Facebook or Twitter)
<input type="text"/>	Other

*** 3. When researching a postsecondary educational institution via its website, what content is most important to help you decide if the institution is "for you"?**

	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important
Tuition/Cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location of institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alumni stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Capstone Survey

***4. When researching a specific department or major within a college or university, what content is most important in helping you decide if that major or department is "for you"?**

	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important
Student stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alumni stories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty news & research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Courses offered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Capstone Survey

Take a look at this webpage to answer the question below.

Campuses : [Twin Cities](#) [Crookston](#)

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**
Driven to Discover™



The Department of
ANTHROPOLOGY

Subfields: [Archaeological](#) | [Biological](#) | [Sociocultural & Linguistic](#) | [Cultural Heritage](#)

01 | [GRADUATE PROGRAMS](#)

02 | [UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS](#)

03 | [NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

04 | [RESEARCH LABS](#)

05 | [PEOPLE](#)

06 | [GIVE TO ANTHROPOLOGY](#)

[Become a Major](#)

[Graduate Application](#)

Department of Anthropology

For nearly a century the Department of Anthropology has prepared students in sociocultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology, and linguistics. With 17 faculty members and about 60 graduate students, the department teaches over 2,200 undergraduate students each year.

The faculty offer a rich array of courses, teaching across geographical, chronological, and analytical frameworks. A lively community of scholars, faculty and students alike are engaged with research and teaching, connecting with colleagues in the humanities and social sciences throughout the College of Liberal Arts as well as with science and medical departments. With dual goals of advancing knowledge and connecting to the community, the department welcomes participants in its public colloquia and annual Anthropology Club Conference.

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Address: 395 [Humphrey Center](#), 301 19th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55455 Phone: 612

© 2010 Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.

Twin Cities Campus

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

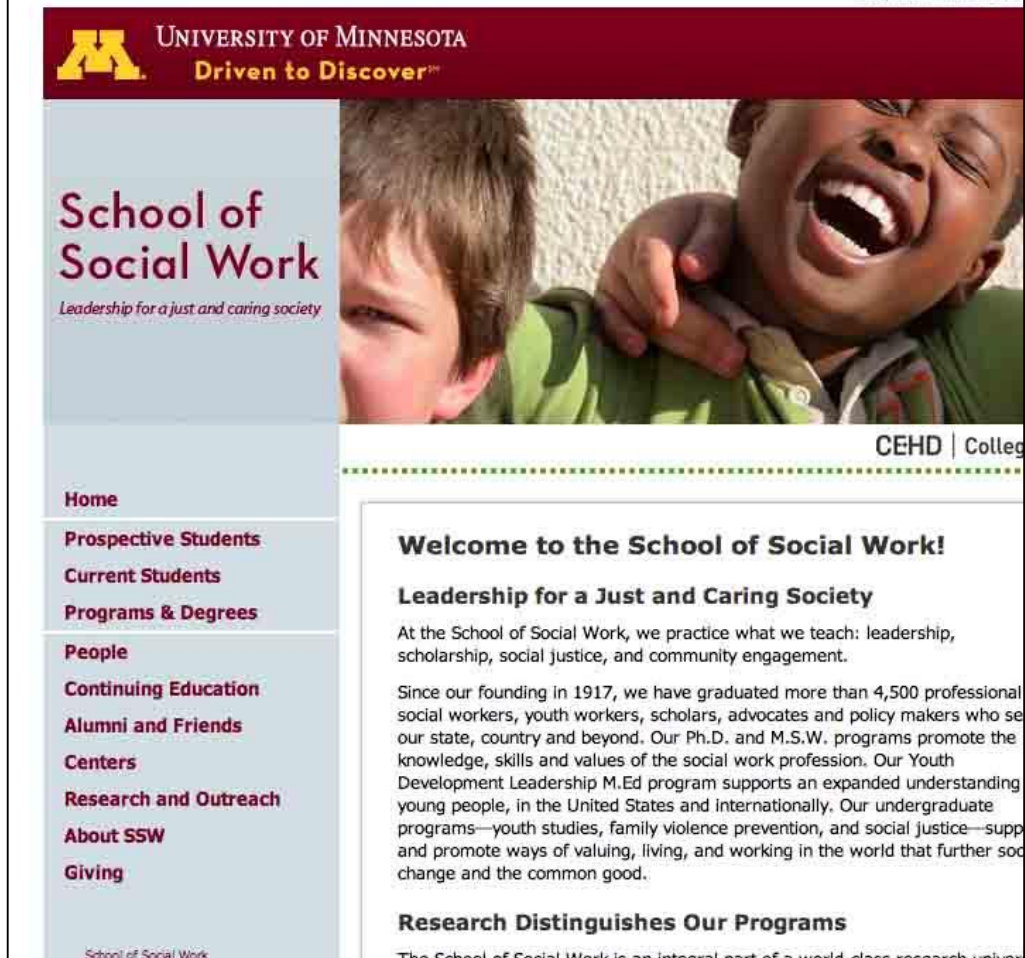
Last modified on August 21, 2012

Capstone Survey

*5. Which "brand" would you associate with the above webpage?

- ☐ University of Minnesota
- ☐ College of Liberal Arts
- ☐ Department of Anthropology
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Take a look at this webpage to answer the question below.



Page 4

Capstone Survey

University of Minnesota
105 Peters Hall
1404 Gortner Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55108
612-625-1220
Contact Us

The School of Social Work is an integral part of a world-class research university. Our graduate programs are unique in Minnesota, preparing a diverse student body to be research-savvy professionals and scholars, and providing research and engagement with a local-to-global impact. Our undergraduate programs are interdisciplinary; emphasize community engagement and putting theory into practice, and build on the strengths of our faculty members and their research.

Watch Our New Video About Our M.S.W. Program



*6. Which "brand" would you associate with the above webpage?

- ☐ University of Minnesota
- ☐ CEHD: College of Education + Human Development
- ☐ School of Social Work
- ☐ Other (please specify)

*7. How important is it to you that a department's website be associated with the brand of the university in which its located?

Not important Neutral Very important

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

*8. How important is it to you that a department's website be associated with the brand of the college in which its located?

Not important Neutral Very important

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Capstone Survey

*9. What factors are important to you on educational websites?

	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important
Method for two-way communication (such as chat functions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contact information on homepage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conversational tone (for example, "you will learn" vs. "our students learn")	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information is up-to-date	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*10. Please answer the following statement.

If I'm searching for information online and I find outdated content on a website, I think less of the organization and its reputation.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

11. Age

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

12. Sex

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Capstone Survey

13. Highest level of education completed

- ☐ Some high school
- ☐ High school degree
- ☐ Associates/technical degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree

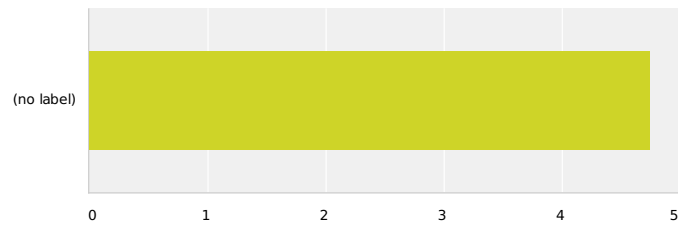
APPENDIX F

Survey Results

Capstone Survey

Q1 When researching a postsecondary educational institution (such as a University), how likely are you to use that institution's website to gather information?

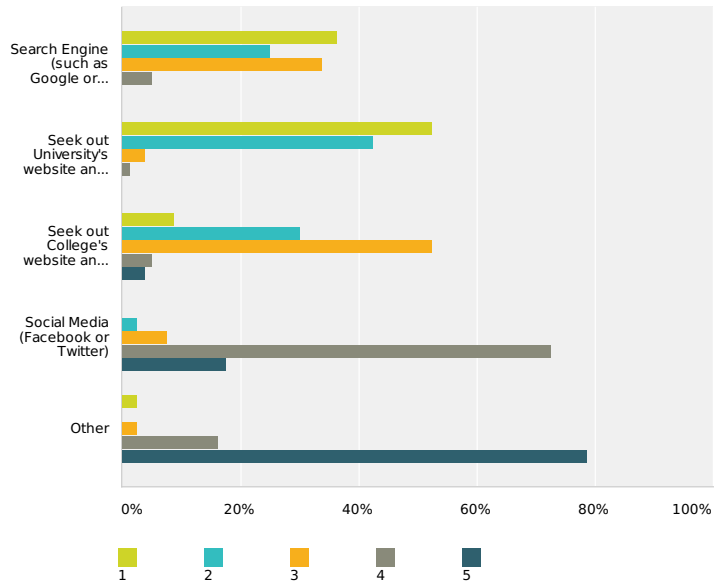
Answered: 80 Skipped: 0



Capstone Survey

Q2 When looking for information about a specific major or department within a University, please rank the methods you would use for finding that major or department's webpage. (1=most likely to use, 5=least likely to use)

Answered: 80 Skipped: 0



	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average Ranking
Search Engine (such as Google or Bing)	36.25% 29	25% 20	33.75% 27	5% 4	0% 0	80	3.93
Seek out University's website and find dept/major from there	52.50% 42	42.50% 34	3.75% 3	1.25% 1	0% 0	80	4.46
Seek out College's website and find dept/major from there	8.75% 7	30% 24	52.50% 42	5% 4	3.75% 3	80	3.35
Social Media (Facebook or Twitter)	0% 0	2.50% 2	7.50% 6	72.50% 58	17.50% 14	80	1.95

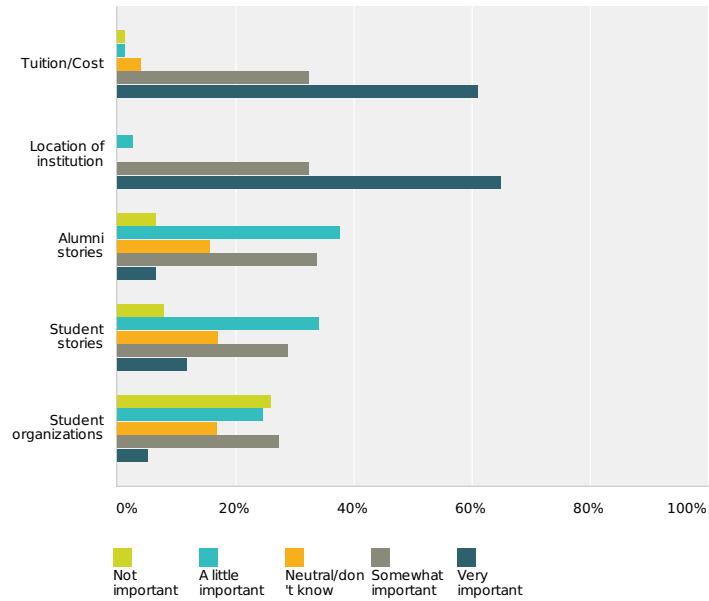
2 / 14

Capstone Survey

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Average Ranking
Other	2.50% 2	0% 0	2.50% 2	16.25% 13	78.75% 63	80	1.31

Q3 When researching a postsecondary educational institution via its website, what content is most important to help you decide if the institution is "for you"?

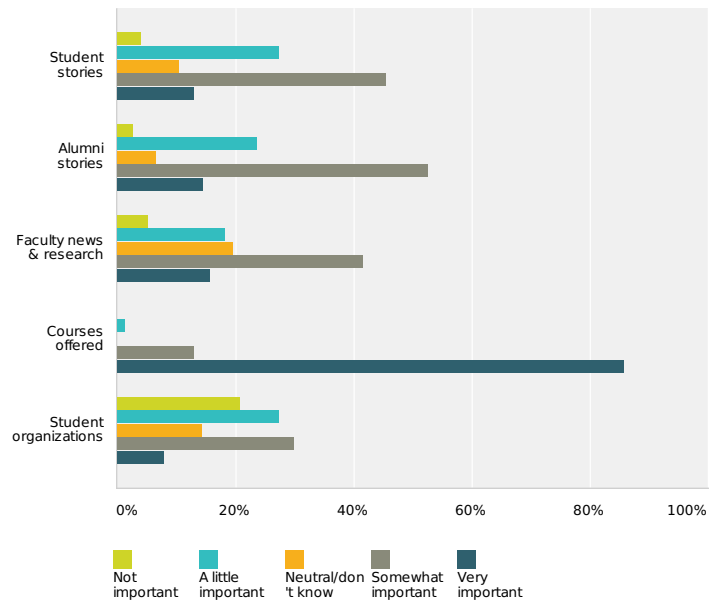
Answered: 77 Skipped: 3



	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important	Total
Tuition/Cost	1.30% 1	1.30% 1	3.90% 3	32.47% 25	61.04% 47	77
Location of institution	0% 0	2.60% 2	0% 0	32.47% 25	64.94% 50	77
Alumni stories	6.49% 5	37.66% 29	15.58% 12	33.77% 26	6.49% 5	77
Student stories	7.89% 6	34.21% 26	17.11% 13	28.95% 22	11.84% 9	76
Student organizations	25.97% 20	24.68% 19	16.88% 13	27.27% 21	5.19% 4	77

Q4 When researching a specific department or major within a college or university, what content is most important in helping you decide if that major or department is "for you"?

Answered: 77 Skipped: 3



	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important	Total
Student stories	3.90% 3	27.27% 21	10.39% 8	45.45% 35	12.99% 10	77
Alumni stories	2.63% 2	23.68% 18	6.58% 5	52.63% 40	14.47% 11	76
Faculty news & research	5.19% 4	18.18% 14	19.48% 15	41.56% 32	15.58% 12	77
Courses offered	0% 0	1.30% 1	0% 0	12.99% 10	85.71% 66	77
Student organizations	20.78% 16	27.27% 21	14.29% 11	29.87% 23	7.79% 6	77



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to Discover™

myU > One Stop >

Search SSW

School of Social Work
Leadership for a just and caring society



CEHD | College of Education + Human Development

Home
Prospective Students
Current Students
Programs & Degrees
People
Continuing Education
Alumni and Friends
Centers
Research and Outreach
About SSW
Giving

Welcome to the School of Social Work!
Leadership for a Just and Caring Society

At the School of Social Work, we practice what we teach: leadership, scholarship, social justice, and community engagement.

Since our founding in 1917, we have graduated more than 4,500 professional social workers, youth workers, scholars, advocates and policy makers who serve our state, country and beyond. Our Ph.D. and M.S.W. programs promote the knowledge, skills and values of the social work profession. Our Youth Development Leadership M.Ed program supports an expanded understanding of young people, in the United States and internationally. Our undergraduate programs—youth studies, family violence prevention, and social justice—support and promote ways of valuing, living, and working in the world that further social change and the common good.

Upcoming Events

May 16, 2013 Thursday
CEHD Graduate Commencement

May 16, 2013 Thursday
CEHD Undergraduate Commencement

May 17, 2013 Friday
Models of Supervision - Developmental Models for the Supervision of Psychotherapy: Clinical and Ethical Dimensions

May 30, 2013 Thursday
The DSM Diagnostic System: Foundations for Clinical Practice

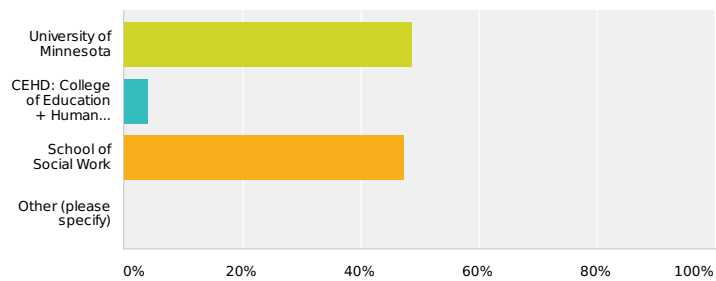
May 31, 2013 Friday
The DSM Diagnostic System: Foundations for Clinical Practice

Research Distinguishes Our Programs

Capstone Survey

Q6 Which "brand" would you associate with the above webpage?

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4

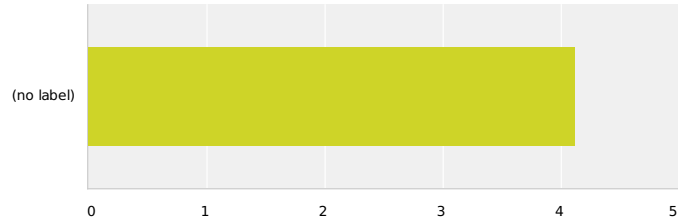


Answer Choices	Responses	
University of Minnesota	48.68%	37
CEHD: College of Education + Human Development	3.95%	3
School of Social Work	47.37%	36
Other (please specify)	0%	0
Total		76

Capstone Survey

Q7 How important is it to you that a department's website be associated with the brand of the university in which its located?

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4

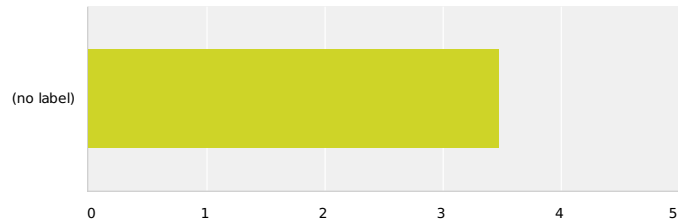


	Not important	(no label)	Neutral	(no label)	Very important	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	1.32% 1	3.95% 3	18.42% 14	34.21% 26	42.11% 32	76	4.12

Capstone Survey

Q8 How important is it to you that a department's website be associated with the brand of the college in which its located?

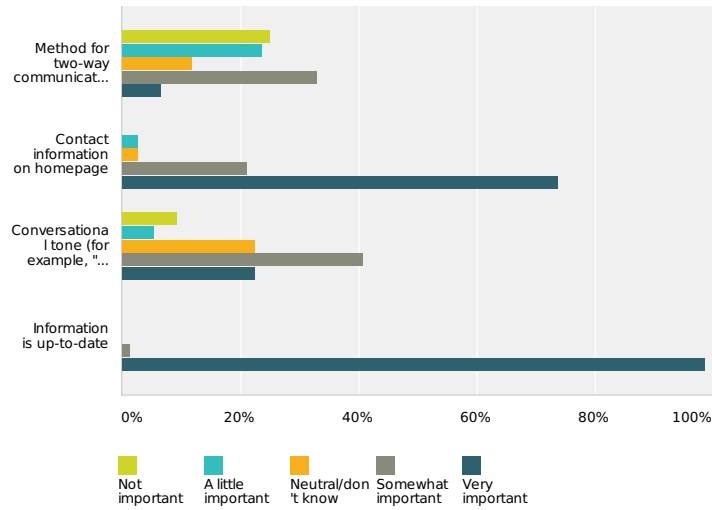
Answered: 76 Skipped: 4



	Not important	(no label)	Neutral	(no label)	Very important	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	7.89% 6	10.53% 8	27.63% 21	34.21% 26	19.74% 15	76	3.47

Q9 What factors are important to you on educational websites?

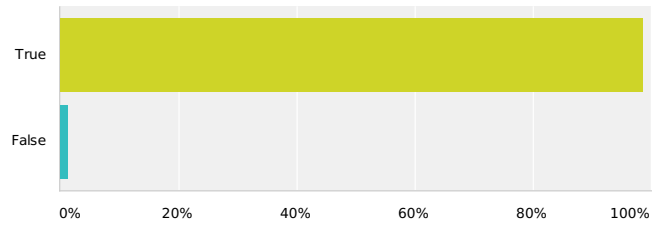
Answered: 76 Skipped: 4



	Not important	A little important	Neutral/don't know	Somewhat important	Very important	Total
Method for two-way communication (such as chat functions)	25% 19	23.68% 18	11.84% 9	32.89% 25	6.58% 5	76
Contact information on homepage	0% 0	2.63% 2	2.63% 2	21.05% 16	73.68% 56	76
Conversational tone (for example, "you will learn" vs. "our students learn")	9.21% 7	5.26% 4	22.37% 17	40.79% 31	22.37% 17	76
Information is up-to-date	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	1.35% 1	98.65% 73	74

Q10 Please answer the following statement. If I'm searching for information online and I find outdated content on a website, I think less of the organization and its reputation.

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4

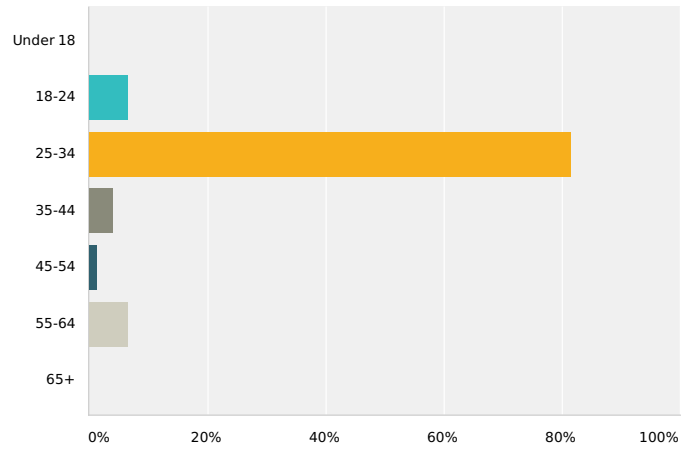


Answer Choices	Responses	
True	98.68%	75
False	1.32%	1
Total		76

Capstone Survey

Q11 Age

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4

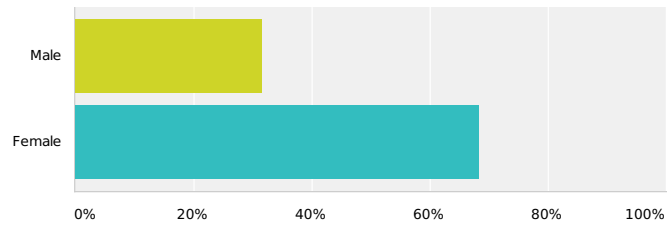


Answer Choices	Responses
Under 18	0% 0
18-24	6.58% 5
25-34	81.58% 62
35-44	3.95% 3
45-54	1.32% 1
55-64	6.58% 5
65+	0% 0
Total	76

Capstone Survey

Q12 Sex

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4

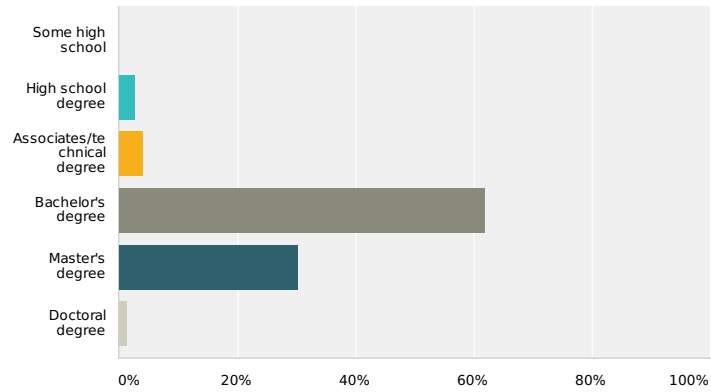


Answer Choices	Responses
Male	31.58% 24
Female	68.42% 52
Total	76

Capstone Survey

Q13 Highest level of education completed

Answered: 76 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses
Some high school	0% 0
High school degree	2.63% 2
Associates/technical degree	3.95% 3
Bachelor's degree	61.84% 47
Master's degree	30.26% 23
Doctoral degree	1.32% 1
Total	76

APPENDIX G

Data from University of Minnesota School of Journalism & Mass Communication website analytics

